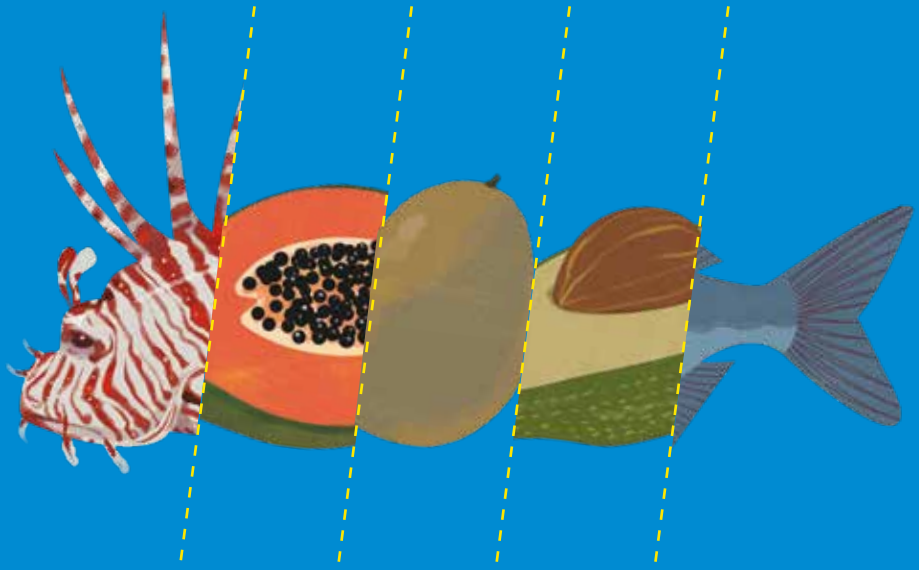
Sustainable consumption handbook

SLOW FISH CARIBE



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Sustainable consumption handbook

INTRODUCTION

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the greatest promise for the future of humanity. Without it, the foundation for human life on the planet is lost, as is the very soil on which civilizations and cultures have been shaped and formed as the result of human adaptation to the natural environment.

Defending, protecting, and **promoting** biodiversity is the only viable path forward. It is a moral duty that we, the generation that inhabits this historic moment, must take on for those who will follow in our footsteps and live on this planet, which, today, we are abusing, hurting, and mistreating.

At a time in history when the media and the public are giving so much attention to cookery and great chefs, we risk losing touch with the origin of raw materials and with the work of a whole host of small-scale producers who, through their labor, provide the necessary and irreplaceable basis for every dish. As citizens, we must be aware that the **gastronomic heritage** of a country rests first and foremost in the hands of these people, who are, among other things, the ones who care for the environment, keep marginal communities alive, save soil from erosion, and protect biological, cultural, and food diversity.

What is Slow Food?

Slow Food is an international organization that works to defend **food biodiversity**, spread taste education, and bring producers and consumers together. The decisions that we make about what to eat determine the health of the planet. Slow Food promotes **sustainable agriculture** and **awareness about food** and its **origins**. The organization has more than 100,000 members and supporters in over 160 countries.

Slow Food promotes food that is good to eat (tasty and healthy), clean for the environment, and fair for producers and consumers, highlighting the work of producers and advocating the importance of fair prices for consumers.

What is the Ark of Taste?

The **Ark of Taste**[1] is a catalogue of products that belong to the culture and traditions of the entire planet and that are at risk of disappearing. The Ark was **created to point out the existence of these products,** draw attention to the risk of their disappearance, and call on everyone to take action to protect them, by seeking them out, buying them, eating them, describing them, helping producers, and, when the products are wild species facing extinction, protecting them to encourage their reproduction.

The aim is to **rediscover these resources and to promote them.**

The Ark includes plant and animal species, as well as processed foods, since, together with plant and animal biodiversity, many cheeses, cured meats, breads, and sweets are also at risk of disappearing. All of these things are unwritten expressions of knowledge accumulated by farmers and artisans, and they represent a complex body of wisdom, practices, and skills passed from generation to generation.

1. For more information about the Ark of Taste, visit www.fondazioneslowfood.com/en/what-we-do/the-ark-of-taste/

What are Slow Food Presidia?

The **Presidia**[2], active since 1999, are projects that help producers break out of isolation, overcome difficulties, and find alternative markets that are more sensitive to the value of their products. The fundamental conditions for moving from cataloguing products (Ark of Taste) to starting a Presidium are that producers know the product first-hand, that they share Slow Food's values and philosophy, and that they are willing to work together to develop the project.

What is Slow Fish?

With fishing, just as with agriculture, Slow Food firmly believes that each individual can help to **change the mechanisms of a globalized food system** based on the intensive exploitation of resources.

By rediscovering the distinctive and forgotten flavors that the globalized market tends to wipe out, and by creating new or updated recipes, Slow Fish tries to **recover the traditional wisdom** of fishing communities (which often still engage in old fishing practices), the diets of past generations, and the familiar and unknown resources in rivers, lakes, and seas. These things are all part of our history and identity.

In this spirit, the **international Slow Fish campaign** launches and works with initiatives that promote artisanal fishing and neglected fish species, and that inspire reflection on the state and management of the sea's resources. To have any chance of success, this reflection must begin at the local level.

2 For more information about the Presidia, visit www.fondazioneslowfood.com/en/what-we-do/slow-food-presidia/

What is Slow Fish Caribe?

To address the critical aspects of **artisanal fishing around the world**, Slow Fish has a range of regional initiatives. One of these regional projects is **Slow Fish Caribe.**

Since 2017, the project has been working on the coast of Quintana Roo, Mexico, which is home to the Sian Ka'an and Banco Chichorro Biosphere Reserves; and in the Colombian Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina, home of the Seaflower Biosphere Reserve. The aim is to promote the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources in the Caribbean's complex, fragile, biodiverse coral reef ecosystems, which are suffering from overexploitation.

With the support of local members, a **strong network for exchanging experiences** is being developed at the regional level. The key elements are the diversification of production, the promotion of local products, the strengthening of production processes linked to artisanal fishing, and the marketing of **Slow Food Presidia** products (the Providencia Black Crab and the Banco Chinchorro and Sian Ka'an Spiny Lobster) and other products central to **traditional gastronomy.**

The project—***Slow Fish Caribe: Strengthening conservation models and sustainable use in Caribbean protected areas linked to Slow Food***—is financed by the European Union, is part of the "EU Biodiversity for Life" initiative, and is being implemented by Slow Food in partnership with the Fundación Activos Culturales Afro (ACUA) and the Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Archipiélago de San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina (CORALINA) in Colombia, and the Colectividad Razonatura and Amigos de Sian Ka'an in Mexico.

Slow Fish Caribe members in Colombia

Fundación ACUA is an organization that promotes sustainable development among populations of African origin by reclaiming and highlighting the cultural and natural assets of the areas where they live, and is committed to creating change in order to bring about **more effective inclusion** in the economic, social, and political life of their countries.

CORALINA is a public-sector corporation whose territorial jurisdiction includes the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina, Colombia. It is the **highest environmental authority** in the Archipelago and has functions relating to the protection, conservation, and sustainable use of renewable natural resources and the environment; **scientific research and technology** transfer; and regional land and marine resource use planning to mitigate or neutralize pressures resulting from the inappropriate exploitation of those resources. It works to **integrate indigenous island communities** and their traditional management practices into processes for the conservation, protection, and sustainable use of renewable natural resources and the environment, and to promote, in **cooperation with international and national entities**, the creation of suitable technologies for the use and conservation of the archipelago's resources and environment.

Slow Fish Caribe members in Mexico

Colectividad Razonatura is a non-profit organization that supports and promotes **sustainable development and ecosystems conservation**, encouraging the participation of and collaboration with local communities. Razonatura A.C. was designed and developed in Mexico by an interdisciplinary group of biology, engineering, and social science professionals with experience in research and applied projects, with the aims of providing development alternatives for the rational use of natural resources and promoting social equity in balance with the natural environment.

Amigos de Sian Ka'an is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1986 as a response by society to ensure the viability of the newly established Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve in Quintana Roo, Mexico. Over the years, the organization has extended its work to the whole of Quintana Roo state, in the east of the Yucatán Peninsula in the Mexican Caribbean. The organization works to preserve the **integrity and functionality of the ecosystems** of the Yucatán Peninsula, promoting socioeconomic development in the communities that live there and influencing their culture and environmental policies through a science-based approach. It is the leading conservation and sustainable development organization on the Yucatán Peninsula, with a superb technical and management team, and it works in partnership with various civil society stakeholders.

GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Seaflower Biosphere Reserve: Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina.

The **Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina** is in the western Caribbean, over 700 kilometers off the coast of Colombia, near the maritime border with Nicaragua. It is made up of the islands of San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina, and the cays of Rocador, Quitasueño, Serrana, Serranilla, and Bolívar.

The **biodiversity** of the archipelago is so rich that UNESCO declared the area a Biosphere Reserve in 2000. In particular, the areas around San Andrés, Providenci, and Quitasueño contain complex and very beautiful coral reefs.

The average annual temperature on the islands is 27 °C and there are two seasons, a dry season and a rainy season. The vegetation of the archipelago consists of **tropical dry forest ecosystems** and a high percentage of mangrove forests. However, given the high volume of tourists and the population explosion in recent years, these ecosystems have **deteriorated significantly,** due to urbanization and the exploitation of natural resources.

The people who live on the islands are "sea people" whose **culture and traditions are associated with marine resources**—this is evident in their cuisine, folklore, and language, which have been maintained through the generations.

Artisanal fishing is the most stable source of income. Fishing activities are rotated with agriculture, depending on the season and agricultural production. The agriculture sector is facing serious difficulties in terms of access to sustainable production techniques that fit with the local ecosystems. Production is primarily for subsitence, not for domestic markets. Some products are traded between producers and women to be eaten at home or processed and sold at fair tables. The islands' food supply is heavily dependent on imports.

The archipelago is **multi-ethnic and multilingual,** and the Raizal people are considered the island natives. Due to their diverse origins, history, and culture, the inhabitants of the archipelago speak three languages: English, Spanish, and Creole.

Traditional cuisine plays an important role in household economies. The sale of street food, or **fair tables**, is a traditional activity on the islands that has been established over several generations, ensuring an additional livelihood or, in many cases, becoming the main source of income for families.

This activity is carried out mainly by women in front of their houses, and is one of the strongest expressions of traditional cuisine, as iconic Raizal dishes are prepared and the range of food on offer is varied and depends on seasonal products.

Various festivities—some national, others local—are part of the traditions and customs of the Raizal community. In addition to being opportunities for fun, these festivals also become important gathering spaces and are a means of **preserving culture** and resisting the imposition of global systems that run counter to local identity and cultural diversity. Some of the most important festivals are the Providencia Black Crab Festival, the Green Moon Festival, the Day of Race and Independence, the International Ethnic Roots Theater Festival, and horse races.

Traditional cooking is a fundamental part of the islands' heritage and of the dynamics of preserving local culture. Other expressions of culture, such as dance, music, and oral traditions, develop in a **gastronomic context**. Island cuisine is based on a strong link between island people and the surrounding environment, which is the source of the traditional diet.

CONSUMER ADVICE

FOOD BIODIVERSITY IN THE ARCHIPELAGO OF SAN ANDRÉS, PROVIDENCIA AND SANTA CATALINA

CONSUMER ADVICE

Eat Local

The archipelago's Raizal community has found subsistence strategies even in the most hostile environments, and diets and food customs have adapted in response to what the environment offers. This is a potential that we must harness to establish **more conscious consumption** patterns that reduce food imports and benefit local producers. Building small-scale relationships between producers, fishers, and local consumers is the best way to move toward **responsible and sustainable consumption** that ensures good, clean and fair food.

Seasonal food

We usually eat only the best known and most heavily marketed products. However, nature offers many options and it is usually local producers who make these options available to us.

When it comes to choosing which fish to eat, **freshness and seasonality** are key. Fortunately, the Caribbean offers many options when it comes to eating fresh fish. Fishers' cooperatives often sell their freshly caught products and even offer processed products. It is also possible to find restaurants near ports, where traditional chefs cook and serve fresh fish bursting with local flavor.

The **seasonality** of products must be kept in mind. There are times when certain species cannot be caught because they are reproducing. These periods are known as closed seasons, and are very important because they allow fish to grow, reproduce, and renew their populations.

Eating fish in a sustainable way means being mindful of these closed seasons and being aware of which varieties are off limits. The seasonality of species varies from place to place, so it is important to ask fishers, fish sellers, or restaurateurs what is in season.

Arriving somewhere new and being able to enjoy distinctive local flavors and varieties is an invaluable experience, and it is up to us to ensure that new generations also have these opportunities.

FOOD BIODIVERSITY IN THE ARCHIPELAGO OF SAN ANDRÉS, PROVIDENCIA AND SANTA CATALINA

What and how we feed ourselves are essential parts of our identity. Gastronomy expresses a people's history and their ecological and social conditions. The products that make up the **traditional diet** of the Raizal people reveal their diverse **cultural heritages**, including the strong influences of traditional African and island cuisines characteristic of the entire Caribbean.

Before the opening of the free port, the population of the islands subsisted on marine products, and fish was the main source of protein for the Raizals.

Although the islanders kept livestock, such as pigs, cattle, and poultry, these were only consumed when fishing was restricted by environmental conditions, or on Sundays and holidays, to vary the weekly menu.

Various food **preservation techniques** are an important feature of traditional island cuisine, guaranteeing the islanders daily access to food, especially during the closed seasons, when there is no harvest, and for fishers' long journeys at sea. Furthermore, these techniques ensured that there was something to eat before the arrival of electricity and refrigeration.

The main techniques include **salting and smoking fish**, making jam or pickles with fruit and vegetables, and making breads and cakes.

Among the most popular products that are still made are basket pepper pickle; jumbaleen, pumpkin, guava, and mango jams and sweets; coconut oil; and traditional breads and cakes such as journey cake, which is baked especially to last for several days.

Other products include the traditional pumpkin or gourd cake, Johnny cake, syrup cake or miel de caña cake (*miel de caña* is similar to molasses), and soda cake; meatballs made from fish or whelks; empanadas and crab patties; fish, whelk, or lobster stews; traditional sweets made from coconut and plum; and drinks like ***agua de sorryl*** (hibiscus with ginger) or "bitter sweet," made with the local bittersweet orange.

RONDÓN or RUNDOWN

Rondón, or rundown, is a traditional soup that combines products from the sea and the land. It is the most iconic dish of the islands, and its preparation is an occasion for social cohesion, a moment that becomes a community event where the bonds of solidarity between islanders are strengthened.

This dish is generally prepared in the open air with an improvised stove consisting of three stones with a deep pot placed on top.

The traditional ingredients are sliced fresh fish, coconut milk, onion or scallions, crushed garlic, peeled pumpkin cut into large pieces, peeled plantain, yam, cassava, and basil. At the end of cooking, dumplings (a mixture made with wheat flour) are usually added to thicken the soup.

The name of this dish comes from the expression "run down de pot," which refers to dishes that are prepared by leaving the ingredients to cook in coconut milk without stirring them. According to collective memory,
housewives would put the pot on the fire to cook, with coconut milk and the other ingredients, while they waited for the fishermen to return with fresh seafood, which was added at the end. On days when the men did not go out to sea, salted or smoked fish was added. The preparation of this soup commemorates the harvest and pays tribute to the most precious products from the sea and land.

It was originally prepared with fish, but locals have changed the recipe and introduced products such as pig's tail, whelk, and crab. This dish is often prepared on special occasions, and everyone takes part in making it, either bringing ingredients that they have grown, or helping with the preparation itself. In addition to being a nutritious and tasty dish, rondón has social importance, as consuming it forges and strengthens community and cultural relations—this is why it is so strongly associated with the identity of the islanders.

Rondón or Rundown

THE SEA: A GREAT PROVIDER OF FOOD!

THE SEA: A GREAT PROVIDER OF FOOD!

CARACOL PALA and CARACOL WILKS or BURGAO

Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

CARACOL PALA

CARACOL WILKS OR BURGAO

The ***caracol wilks***, or *burgao*, is a small marine snail (or whelk) that lives on rocky coastlines. It is collected with the help of a pole, used to detach it from the rock. According to the older generation, this whelk used to be collected in large quantities at **Point'a Reef**, the tip of the reef and the northernmost part of the barrier reef that protects Providencia: It is said that harvesters would bring back sacks full of whelks.

This shellfish is highly prized by the population, especially in festive seasons such as Semana Santa (Holy Week). Due to **overexploitation**, consumption of caracol wilks has fallen considerably in recent years. The whelks are currently not sold, as there are numerous restrictions on harvesting them, including long closed seasons.

CHUB FISH

Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

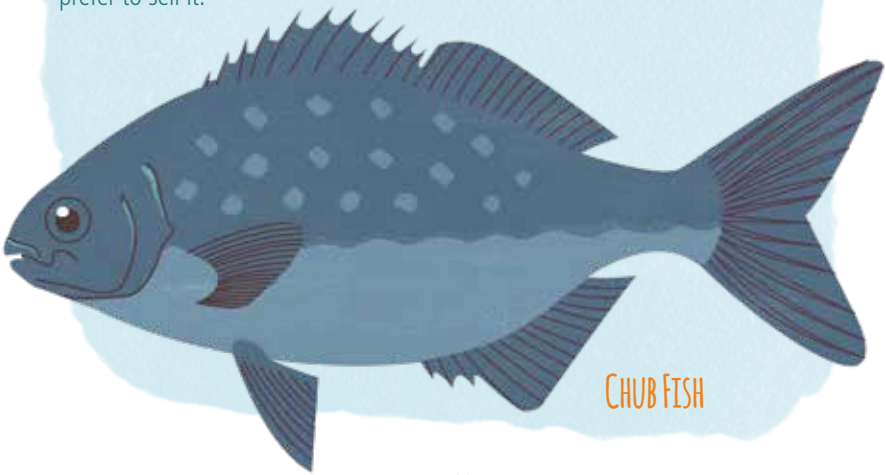
There are some varieties of fish that are particularly commonly eaten on the islands: One is chub fish, with which Raizal people have a love-hate relationship.

Traditionally, the inhabitants of Providencia fish for this species in an area known as **Punta Rocosa.** The chub fish has a very particular flavor and requires a special preparation method. Due to its characteristic strong smell, many people do not eat this fish.

It is fished sustainably and sold locally. A festival is held in honor of this fish, in which chefs and the islands' fishermen are challenged to come up with innovative recipes.

Because of the **low consumption and low commercial value** of this fish, the tradition associated with its capture and preparation could be at risk, as islanders lose interest in preserving the culture associated with the species.

Other important seafood products from the island include **crabs and lobsters.** Before lobster became popular among tourists, and therefor more commercially valuable, the islanders ate it occasionally. Now they eat it very rarey, as they prefer to sell it.



Chub Fish

LIONFISH

The spotfin lionfish (or *pez león*) is an exotic species from the Indian and Pacific oceans. There are several explanations for its introduction into the Caribbean. This **invasive species** has a major impact on Caribbean ecosystems, as it is a predator of most commercially and ecologically important fish and invertebrate species. As a **non-native species**, the lionfish has no predators.

However, in recent years there have been lionfish fishing contests and gastronomic contests in the Caribbean region, and many restaurants now include this species on their menus.

COCONUT AND CINNAMON LIONFISH SKEWER

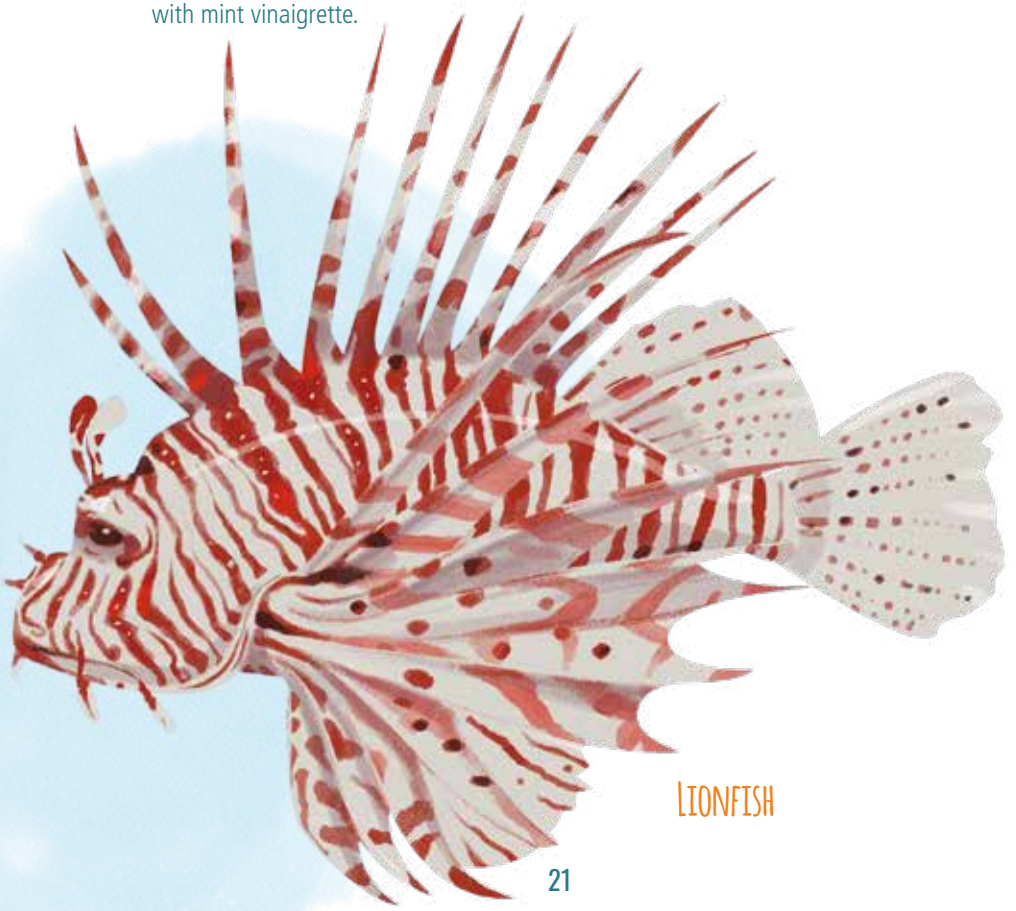
Caribbean Place restaurant (Providencia Island)
The chef is a member of the Slow Food Chefs' Alliance

INGREDIENTS for 4 PEOPLE

800 GRAMS SPOTFIN LIONFISH FILLET
100 GRAMS RED ONION
80 GRAMS RED PEPPER
200 GRAMS SHREDDED COCONUT
1 TABLESPOON CINNAMON
1/2 TABLESPOON MUSTARD
1/2 TEASPOON DRIED OREGANO
1/2 TEASPOON SUGAR
SALT
COCONUT OIL (OPTIONAL)
VEGETABLE OIL

PREPARATION

Season the fillets with the mustard, salt, and oregano.
Cut the fillets into large chunks (4 chunks per skewer).
Cut the pepper and onion into pieces the same size as the fish chunks.
Assemble the skewers and set the aside.
Mix the coconut, cinnamon, and sugar.
Coat the skewers well with the mixture.
Heat a frying pan over medium heat, add the vegetable oil, and cook the skewers on both sides.
Finally, drizzle a little coconut oil over the skewers.
Serve with cumin-steamed cassava and a salad of lettuce and mango dressed with mint vinaigrette.



LIONFISH

SEAWEED

***Hypnea musciformis* seaweed catalogued in the Ark of Taste.**

Seaweed is usually collected during fishing expeditions in the cays where fishermen traditionally go. It is eaten especially by the fishermen of **Providencia**. Seaweed is collected from the reef and then washed and left to dry in the sun. After this process it takes on a plastic-like texture and can keep for months.

Seaweed is usually made into a punch, mixed with eggs, fruit juice, and nutmeg or cinnamon.

SEAWEED

Fishermen typically ate seaweed during fishing expeditions, when they had to spend days at sea waiting to catch fish. They often found themselves without food and seaweed allowed them to **satisfying their hunger.** Some fishermen claim that *Hypnea musciformis* seaweed is an **aphrodisiac.**

Some animal species that are not usually available for sale are turtles and seabirds.
Turtles are traditionally eaten in the area, and are prized for their meat and eggs. There are currently restrictions on the capture of turtles, but turtle is still prepared in some parts of the islands and is generally offered only to locals, behind closed doors.

Seabirds have also been used as a local food source: Fishermen who traveled to the cays on trips that could last for several days often relied on seabirds, as there was little else to eat.

One of the most popular birds for consumption was the booby, which used to be found in large numbers nesting on the cays. The meat of these birds was salted so that it could be consumed over several days. Due to the transformation of fishing dynamics and the presence of the Colombian naval fleet in the cays, these birds have migrated elsewhere and are no longer eaten.

TROPICAL DRY FOREST: WHAT DOES IT OFFER US?

THE SWEET NECTAR OF FRUIT

TROPICAL DRY FOREST:

WHAT DOES IT OFFER US?

Other ecosystems that provide food are the forests, both native and secondary, that are still present on the islands. These forests are where most fruits come from, and they are also home to the Providencia Black Crab, for which the Raizal community created a Slow Food Presidium.

PROVIDENCIA BLACK CRAB

Slow Food Presidium

Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

The **Providencia Black Crab** (*Gecarcinus ruricola*) is a terrestrial species that lives in the islands' tropical dry forests. Every year, in April and June, the adults leave the forest and enter the sea in order to spawn. Approximately 20 days later, the baby crabs return to the forest to continue growing.

Although this crab used to occur throughout the archipelago, in recent years it has not been captured on the island of San Andrés, where its numbers have declined due to urbanization and the **disappearance of dry forest.**

The Providencia Black Crab is **one of the most culturally important products** from the island: It is used in various traditional dishes and represents an important source of income for the families of Providencia and Santa Catalina.

It is a **fundamental food** in the islanders' diet, and many prefer it to fish, lobster, shrimp, and even caracol pala. Providencia Black Crab is traditionally prepared in many different ways, such as crab patties, rice'n crab, crab's back, boiled crab, stew crab, crab soup, rondón, and crab claw. Recently, innovative new recipes have been devised, such as crab pasta and crab pizza.

There is a close relationship between the **cultural practices** of the islands

and the Providencia Black Crab, including songs and stories about the crab's behavior. Depictions of crabs can be found in sculptures, crafts, and decorative objects. There is a popular song dedicated to Mama crab by the Providencia musician Jammin Jah: The lyrics and music, which has a rhythm reminiscent of a crab's movements, allude to the crab's migration. Children and young people use this song in the dance of the Providencia Black Crab, in which they simulate the animal's movements and way of walking.

Providencia Black Crab

THE SWEET NECTAR OF FRUIT

The islands of San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina feature a **wide variety of mangoes**. Thirteen varieties—which differ in terms of the shape, taste, and aroma of the fruit, and the color of the foliage—have been documented.

MANGO VARIETIES: NUMBER ELEVEN, MANGO COMÚN, RACHEL, MANGO DE AZÚCAR, JHON SMITH, TUNKU, BULL SEED, BUSY ROBOT, ROUND MANGO, WHATER BATY, NIDOL MANGO, KIDNEY MANGO, MANGO CHACLETA.

Some of these varieties are catalogued in the Ark of Taste

According to the locals, each of these varieties has different origins: Many of them were introduced by natives after fishing trips to other areas of the Caribbean and Central America; others arrived on the island along with the Spanish, English, and pirate ships that used to pass through.

Mangoes

The ***jumbaleen* (or *grosella*)** is a product that has almost disappeared from the islands. This fruit is used to make "stew jumbaleen" (or *dulce de jumbaleen*), a traditional and very popular sweet.

STEW JUMBALEEN

Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

The **jumbaleen** is a small fruit, with a sweet-and-sour taste, that grows in bunches on medium-sized trees. The preparation of stew jumbaleen is linked to traditional food preservation methods.

The fruits are boiled in syrup or miel de caña until the liquid reduces and thickens, coating the fruit. Prepared this way, the fruit can keep for months. Preparations of this kind are usually made by women and sold to locals and tourists at fair tables. They are also sold in restaurants as a typical dish.

As this fruit has become scarcer in the archipelago due to deforestation and the loss of seeds and crops, stew jumbaleen has become more difficult to find.

JUMBALEEN

Other fruits found in the area are the ***mamoncillo*, giant plum, *jobo*** or june plum, tamarind, and bittersweet orange or *naranja agria*.

BITTERSWEET ORANGE

Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

The bittersweet is a citrus variety, similar to an orange, that grows on small trees on the islands of **San Andrés and Providencia.**

Due to the different composition of the soils of San Andrés and Providencia, the taste of the fruit varies: Providencia bittersweet is much sweeter and refreshing on the palate, while the San Andrés variety is more acidic.

This fruit is the basis of island cuisine. Traditionally it is used to cook fish, prepared using various cooking methods. It is also used to make refreshing drinks that are sweetened with miel de caña.

Bittersweet Orange

The drinks are consumed immediately, as the bitter taste becomes more intense as the fruit oxidizes (this is one of the characteristics that differentiates the bittersweet from traditional oranges).

Destruction of secondary forests has led to the decline of this citrus on the islands. The growth of urban centers into areas that were traditionally cultivated has reduced the number and size of areas suitable for growing this fruit.

JOBO

Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

Two kinds of *jobo* are found on the island, *Spondias mombin* and *Spondias dulcis*, locally referred to as june plum and plum, respectively.

Both varieties are native to the islands and feature heavily in local cuisine. The fruit is used to make a very popular sweet dish known as stew plum, june plum, *dulce de plum*, or *dulce de jobo*.

Stew plum is a dessert that is prepared on special occasions and commonly sold by the women of the island at Fair and Dance events, community festivals organized to raise money for people in the community. Stew plum is also sold on Sundays at fair tables, which are set up along the beach of San Luis, on the island of San Andrés.

JOBO

MANTEQUILLA AVOCADO

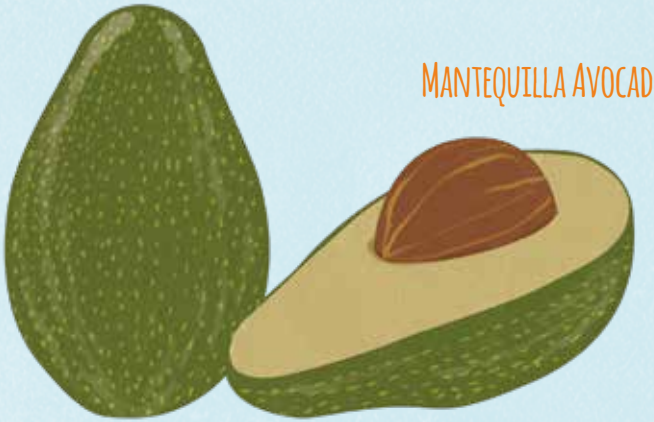
Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

The ***aguacate mantequilla*** (literally "butter avocado", also known as "butter pear") is a variety of avocado found on the islands **of San Andrés and Providencia.** The tree grows to a height of 6-10 meters.

The fruit is purported to have **medicinal properties**—it is said to reduce cholesterol and improve the skin.

This product is an important part of the **traditional gastronomy** of the islands, but it is currently very difficult to find it on islanders' tables. At harvest time, those who still have plants share the avocados with their neighbors and friends. Other inhabitants of the island go into the remaining wild areas on San Andrés to look for it. It is not sold, but is collected for the islanders' own consumption and to trade for other products when there is a harvest.

The presence of this plant has been decreasing on the islands, and its most dramatic reduction has been on the island of San Andrés, where it currently represents only 1% of the wild fruit trees.



Mantequilla Avocado

BREADFRUIT

Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

Breadfruit (*árbol de pan*) and coconut are the most iconic trees of the islands and are a **fundamental part of islanders' diets**. Although they were introduced and cultivated by farmers, today they grow everywhere.

On the island of San Andrés there is a variety that is pink or orange on the inside.

In **traditional cuisine** this fruit is eaten fried or parboiled as an accompaniment to the fish or other protein being served. It can also be made into flour (which is used to make porridges) or juice.

The latex from this tree is used to treat ailments such as toothache.

Breadfruit

There is a legend around this tree, according to which there was once a family that was dying of hunger and the father of the family asked that, when he died, his children bury him at the highest point of the island. Upon his death, his family carried out his wish. The day after he was buried, his children returned and found a great tree in the spot where they had buried their father: His feet had turned into roots, his body into the trunk, his arms into long branches, and his head into a large fruit. The family was thus able to save itself from starvation.

Breadfruit is one of the main features of traditional festivals on the island of San Andrés, including the **Green Moon Festival**, in which the fruit is presented in different forms to be tasted during the island's gastronomic exhibition.

This product is usually not sold, as each family has a tree in the back yard.

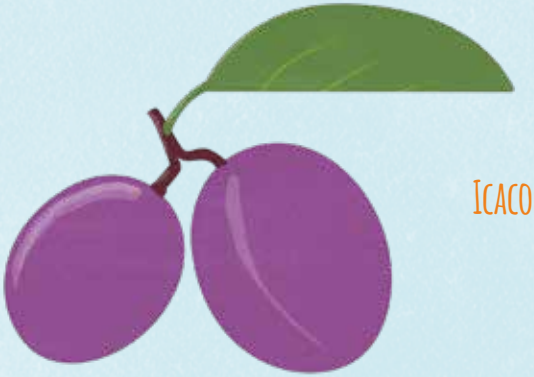
ICACO

Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

The ***icaco* or cocoplum** is another traditional fruit from the islands. Locals believe that the seeds were left on of the islands' beaches by hurricanes.

At present, this product is very scarce on the islands due to the destruction of the mangrove forests. Cayo Cangrejo is the place where this fruit can be found in greatest abundance.

Two varieties of icaco are found on the islands and are distinguished by the color of their skin: One is yellow-green and the other has a pink color with a reddish tint. This fruit is used to prepare icaco stew, a sweet or preserve that is very popular on the islands. To prepare it, the fruit is boiled in syrup or miel de caña until the liquid reduces and takes on a caramel texture.



ICACO

PAPAYA BREAD

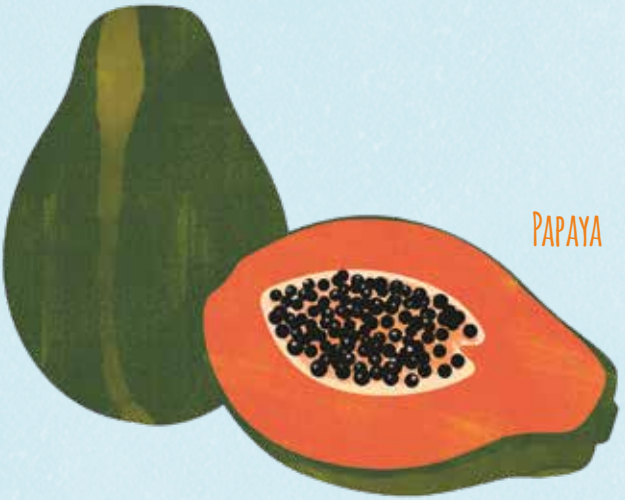
Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

Island cuisine has traditionally included a wide range of cakes and desserts, such as **papaya cake or papaya bread.** The tradition of preparing these cakes and breads is linked to food preservation. At present, it is not common to find this type of preparation and the knowledge associated with it is at risk of di-

sappearing. Those who know how to prepare this bread are older women, and young people are not very interested in learning this culinary art. Papaya bread or cake is prepared when the papaya is green, and coconut milk and vanilla are added.

The following products are cultivated on San Andrés and Providencia: **cassava** (*yuca dulce* and *yuca brava*), **sweet potato, plantain, malanga, yam, pumpkin, melon, and watermelon**.

In the past, local varieties of some of these products could be found. Unfortunately, over time they have been replaced by commercial varieties and today



PAPAYA

the local ones are extinct. Examples of cassava varieties are black stick, sievy and rocky point sievy, jucelita, and bitta casada or dan dan, known as yuca brava.

In terms **of varieties of yam**, there are the nigger yam, christell yam, and white yam. There are also two varieties of purple yams. Varieties of sweet potato include sam rankin and choke woman.

BAMI or PAN DE YUCA BRAVA

Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

Bami, or ***pan de yuca brava***, is a bread made with flour from the yuca brava variety of cassava. It is traditionally used as an accompaniment to minced fish, stew crab, or whelk, and can be eaten at any time of day.

Since the traditional ingredient with which this bread was prepared is practically extinct on the island, the **traditional recipe is also at risk** of disappearing. The women of the island have made a variation using sweet cassava, but they

BAMI OR
PAN DE YUCA BRAVA

feel that it is not the same.
To prepare the bread, the cassava is grated and soaked to extract the bitter taste. It is then squeezed with a cloth to remove the excess water. The flour is then cooked in a frying pan with a little coconut oil until it is completely dry and the loaf is browned on both sides. It is served warm in pieces.

Near households, it is **common to find gardens of aromatic herbs**, which are used to prepare dishes or for medicinal purposes. The most popular is basil, whose distinctive aroma is closely associated with the islands' cuisine. Other important aromatic herbs and condiments are oregano and basket pepper, a traditional chili pepper from the area.

BASKET PEPPER

Product catalogued in the Ark of Taste

Basket pepper is a vinegar and coconut oil pickle that is often used in the islands' traditional cuisine. It is usually added to fried fish and other dishes, such as empanadas and tarts, soups, and stews. Although the fresh basket pep-

per is sometimes added directly to dishes, it is more commonly found pickled. The pepper's traditional name on the islands is **Scotch bonnet**, owing to its resemblance to a tam o' shanter. The chili started to be prepared as a pickle to preserve it and to always have a supply at home to use in traditional recipes or to add to meals. The plants can usually be found in household back yards or gardens.

Basket pepper is not commonly sold, as most people make it themselves from their own plants, but those who don't have a garden can find the un-pickled peppers in some shops.

Basket Pepper

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